

## MODULE 1

# GETTING READY FOR REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

### CONTEXT

Welcome to Unit 3 of *Steps to Success*. Throughout this unit, you will be learning about the important role that reflective practice plays in effective mentor-coaching. As with Units 1 and 2 in *Steps to Success*, you will be examining this important mentor-coaching skill in the context of a particular early literacy and language content area. The content focus of this unit is Language Development in children from birth through age five.

### OVERVIEW

- Exercise 1: Completing the Self-Assessment
- Exercise 2: Participating in Online Discussions
- Exercise 3: Promoting Children’s Language Development—  
An Observation

**EXERCISE 1: COMPLETING THE SELF-ASSESSMENT**

This opening exercise will give you an opportunity to think about and assess your own knowledge of effective practices to promote children's language development. The deeper your knowledge of this content area, the more effective you will be in helping protégés to strengthen their practice. The self-assessment will help you identify areas in which to build your knowledge and skills.



**Self-Assessment: Language Development**

Below is a set of skills that is important for your protégés to have as they help children develop their listening, understanding, speaking, and communicating abilities. On a scale of 1 to 5, rate your current skills for situations where you need to:

SKILLS	I AM NOT SKILLED IN THIS AREA		I AM SOMEWHAT SKILLED IN THIS AREA		I AM HIGHLY SKILLED IN THIS AREA
1. Know and articulate Head Start Child Outcomes related to Listening and Understanding, and Speaking and Communicating	1	2	3	4	5
2. Help protégés understand how infants and toddlers learn language	1	2	3	4	5
3. Guide protégés in engaging infants and toddlers in fun, shared communication	1	2	3	4	5
4. Help protégés make important connections between oral language and written language	1	2	3	4	5
5. Share with protégés strategies for promoting children's understanding of increasingly complex and varied vocabulary	1	2	3	4	5
6. Help protégés understand the relationship between quality conversations and children's language development	1	2	3	4	5
7. Guide protégés to engage children in extended, responsive conversations about interesting and engaging topics	1	2	3	4	5
8. Help protégés plan curriculum topics that foster quality conversations	1	2	3	4	5
9. Help protégés to increase families' understanding of how children learn language and how to support children's language development in the home.	1	2	3	4	5

**Reflecting on Your Self-Assessment**

Based on the self-assessment, are you ready to guide staff members in supporting children's language development? Do you feel you need to learn more about these early language domains? If so, you may want to check out additional resources before you take part in the facilitated sessions. These resources are available through the Head Start Information and Publication Center (HSIPC) at <http://www.headstartinfo.org>.

## EXERCISE 2: PARTICIPATING IN ONLINE DISCUSSIONS

In this exercise, you will go to STEP-Net (<http://www.step-net.org>). You will visit the Unit 3 Discussion where you will “talk” with other Mentor-Coaches from across the country. The discussion will focus on using reflective conferencing to help protégés support children’s language development. A *Steps to Success* staff member will facilitate the discussion, answer questions, and add postings to keep the conversation lively. Please follow these steps before you go to STEP-Net.

1. **Prepare for the discussion.** Read and reflect on the following vignette. Use the space provided to jot down questions or thoughts you wish to share.

### Vignette—Sonora

Sonora is a Mentor-Coach in a large Head Start and Early Head Start program. The program has designed an on-going professional development plan for all of the Mentor-Coaches that includes training and support in using reflective conferencing. Sonora’s supervisor conducts most of the training sessions, and she also schedules regular meetings with each Mentor-Coach. Periodically, the meetings revolve around discussing a videotape of Sonora engaged in an actual conference with one of her protégés. Sonora finds the meetings to be extremely helpful.

Sonora sees the value of using reflection in her Mentor-Coach work. She believes that the most-effective teachers are those who reflect on and learn from their own experiences. She has worked hard to develop a trusting relationship with each of her protégés. She visits each classroom on a regular basis and conducts formal observations that are planned ahead of time with each protégé. She fully prepares for the conference by analyzing her observations and developing questions to foster her protégés’ reflection.

From her analysis of the videotapes, Sonora has identified a struggle that she faces in her conferencing techniques. She has discovered that when she is having a conference with a quiet and reserved protégé, she tends to take over the conversation. Her well-prepared questions go out the window, and she finds herself in a one-sided dialogue, giving feedback and advice.

Sonora discusses her struggle with her supervisor the next time they met. “I can’t think of any other way to handle the situation. If I don’t jump in and start talking, I’m afraid that our entire time together will be wasted. I’m beginning to think that maybe reflective conferencing isn’t for everyone.”

Questions or thoughts I wish to share:

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2. **Log on to STEP-Net.** Follow the steps below to log on to STEP-Net and to register and participate in the discussion.

**Directions for Logging on to STEP-Net:**

Go to <http://www.step-net.org>. *Steps to Success* will have its own button on the STEP-Net site. You can click on *Steps to Success* to enter the site.

**Directions for Participating in the Discussion:**

Please join in! When you log on you will notice that others have posted their thoughts. Read their comments and post your questions or comments. Check in often. You will be able to participate in the discussion for several weeks.

### EXERCISE 3: PROMOTING CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT—AN OBSERVATION

During the Unit 3 training, you will be asked to plan a reflective conference for one of your protégés. To prepare, you will need to observe the strategies the protégé uses to support children's language development. Use the demonstration tool that appears on the following pages to record your notes. Be sure to involve the protégé in your planning for the observation. Use what you learned in Unit 2 about pre-observation conferencing, observation, and using an observation tool.

Prior to the observation, review the list of strategies on the demonstration tool. Note that some of the strategies are appropriate for all age groups. Those marked "3–4" are appropriate for 3- to 4-year-old children.

Choose one protégé to observe. Plan to observe for 30 minutes to one hour. Focus your observations on the protégé's work with children. Look for strategies that the protégé uses to promote language development and document the evidence. Note direct quotes. Also, jot down descriptions of nonverbal communication. Record any other relevant behaviors of the protégé or children.

**NOTE:** Bring the completed observation tool with you to the Unit 3, Module 2, facilitated session.

## Promoting Children's Language Development: An Observation

Setting: \_\_\_\_\_

Time (beginning and ending): \_\_\_\_\_

Ages of children: \_\_\_\_\_

Protégé's strategies that promote language development	Evidence: What was heard and seen?
Makes clear effort to engage in and encourage verbal interaction.	
Encourages child(ren) to be equal partners in conversations. Keeps conversations going back and forth, over multiple turns.	
Tries to understand child(ren)'s communication. Shows interest in child(ren)'s communication.	
Adds to child(ren)'s spoken vocabulary. Names objects. Explains word meanings. Describes what they are doing or seeing.	
Is on child(ren)'s eye level.	
Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to support child(ren)'s understanding.	
Expands child(ren)'s communication. Turns one-word statements or phrases into full sentences. Models correct grammar.	

<b>Protégé's strategies that promote language development</b>	<b>Evidence: What was heard and seen?</b>
3–4: Encourages taking turns and listening to others in group conversations.	
3–4: Encourages child(ren) to tell narrative stories. Stories can be from their personal lives. Or, they can be retold from books or class events.	
3–4: Gives children chances to express their ideas, feelings, worldview, life stories, etc.	
3–4: Expresses own ideas, feelings, worldview, life stories, etc.	
3–4: Talks with child(ren) about ideas being studied in the curriculum.	
3–4: Uses open-ended questions to challenge child(ren)'s thinking. Asks them to predict, solve a problem, imagine, and reflect on learning.	
3–4: Encourages child(ren) to provide fuller descriptions and explanations. Uses probing questions to help them do so.	
3–4: Assists child(ren) in asking their own questions. Also helps them figure out how to answer them. Does not immediately provide the answers.	